AURARIA HIGHER EDUCATION CENTER™

Campus Crisis Communications Plan

AHEC Office of Emergency Preparedness

Updated May 2018

Crisis Communications Plan

I.   Purpose

This plan provides guidelines for communicating within the campus, and from the campus to the media and the public, in the event of an emergency or crisis.

Disasters, emergencies, and crises disrupt the normal activities of the campus and may require activation of the AHEC Emergency Operations Plan. This Crisis Communications Plan describes the information flow and the role of campus entities in communicating vital information to members of the Auraria Campus community and the public.

This plan is to be flexibly used with emergency decision-making procedures of the campus.

Elements are exercised routinely in conjunction with emergency drills and actual plan activations. Appendices should be checked for accuracy and completeness at least annually, and as often as necessary.
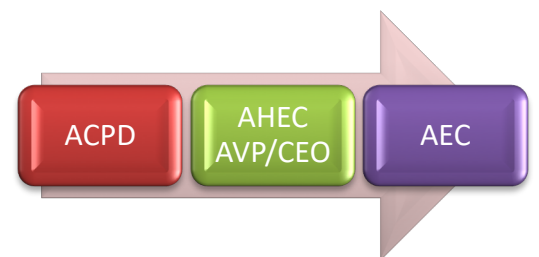
II.   Objectives

1. Determining whether the situation requires invoking this plan.

2. Assembling the Crisis Communications Team to recommend responses.

3. Implementing immediate actions to:

   a. Identify key constituencies who need to be informed.

   b. Communicate facts about the situation and minimize rumors.

   c. Restore a sense of confidence and order.

III.   Procedures

A. Assessment

The AHEC Assistant VP (AVP) of Campus Relations (or their designee) will be made aware of a potential crisis or emergency by the Chief of the Auraria Campus Police Department and/or the AHEC Chief Executive Officer.
The AVP of Campus Relations or their designee will then determine whether it is appropriate to invoke this plan and activate all or part of the Crisis Communications Team. If activated, the AVP of Campus Relations will notify each of the institutional Communications Directors/Public Information Officers or their backups as soon as practical.

B. Issuance of a "Timely Warning"

Per the requirements of the Clery Act, "Timely Warning" advisories are made to the campus community for crimes that are reported to the Auraria Campus Police Department or local police and which may represent an ongoing threat to the safety of students or employees. The Chief of the Auraria Police Department or their designee shall make the decision as to whether an incident poses an ongoing threat and if a "Timely Warning" advisory is required. In the event that an advisory is required, the Chief of Police or their designee shall provide the AHEC AVP of Campus Relations or their designee with the specifics of the case for the purpose of drafting the "Timely Warning" advisory. In all cases, Timely Warning advisories are then sent by AHEC staff via electronic mail directly to all staff, faculty, and students on the Auraria Campus using their institution-provided email accounts.

These advisories may also be made using one or a combination of the following methods:

- Press Releases

- Crime Advisories

- Making reports available to the campus community and media through campus websites and newspapers, and radio and television news stations

- Advertising in campus publications

C. Issuance of an "Immediate Notification"

In the event that there is a confirmed significant emergency or dangerous situation involving an immediate threat to the campus community (per the judgment of the Chief of the Auraria Campus Police Department or their designee), AHEC will, without undue delay, and taking into account safety of the community, determine the content of the notification and initiate the immediate notification system. However, if in the professional judgment of responsible authorities, the notification may compromise efforts to assist victims or to contain, respond to, or otherwise mitigate the emergency, the notification may be delayed.

As with the above section related to "Timely Warnings", the Chief of Police or their designee shall provide the AHEC AVP of Campus Relations or their designee with the specifics of the case for the purpose of drafting the content of the immediate notification. AHEC also maintains pre-scripted short message scripts for a variety of hazards to assist in the timely issuance of immediate notifications. **In all cases, Immediate Notifications will be sent by AHEC staff via the electronic Emergency Notification System (i.e. text messaging system) directly to all staff, faculty, students, and visitors on the Auraria Campus that have subscribed to the free system, as maintained by each institution.** A variety of other communications tools may be used, including campus-wide email messages, broadcast voice mail messages, updates to the Auraria Campus Emergency Hotline (1-877-556-EMER) and notices posted on electronic message boards and www.ahec.edu.

D. Crisis Communications Team

The Crisis Communications Team is comprised of staff that may play a critical role in addressing the crisis, including representatives of the following, as needed:

- AHEC Communications & Campus Relations, including AHEC Emergency Preparedness Manager

- Auraria Campus Police Department

- Institutional Communications Directors/Public Information Officers

- Campus Telecommunications/Information Technology

In addition, the Crisis Communications Team may need to engage the support of any of the following entities:

- AHEC Facilities Services

- AHEC Executive Office/Business Services/HR staff in Admin 370 (i.e. answering phones, etc.)

- CU Denver Anschutz Medical Campus Staff (Emergency Preparedness, Police)

- Institutional Student Life/Student Affairs offices

- Auraria Executives Council[1]

- EPARC (Emergency Policy & Recovery Committee)

- AHEC/Institutional counsel

- The affected unit(s)

The above list is not meant to be exhaustive.

Time is of the essence in communicating crucial information to the campus community and the news media, and the team will be assembled as quickly as possible. Based on the timing, location, and severity of the incident(s) or event(s), this may occur either in-person or virtually. The AHEC AVP of Campus Relations will determine when a sufficient number of the team is engaged.

Appendix C4 contains a list of key Crisis Communications Team members. For each primary member, there is at least one alternate.

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[1] It is already understood that this team is actively involved in other non-communications decision points as needed; see Appendix C1

The Crisis Communications Team may authorize the following:

1. **Spokesperson**

   The designation of a spokesperson will be incident-dependent. Generally, this is the highest-ranking individual who has direct knowledge of the events, or the AHEC AVP of Campus Relations. The individual selected will have the highest credibility and understanding of the events surrounding the crisis. Other qualified public information officers may fill in for these individuals if the crisis is prolonged, but they should not be the initial responders to the general public, the media, or the campus community.

   In the event that the incident is related to a criminal act, the basic thresholds that the Auraria Campus Police Department may use to determine the lead agency for public information are as follows:

   - Misdemeanor Crime = Auraria Campus Police Department lead (ACPD Chief or designee)

   - Felony Crime = Denver Police Department/District Attorney lead (PIO or designee)

   As a criminal act relates to a particular student/faculty/staff of a single institution, the institutional PIO shall be the primary media contact, in partnership with the law enforcement spokesperson. If a criminal act relates to the campus facilities or operations, the AHEC AVP of Campus Relations shall be the contact.

   Incidents that are not crime-related will follow similar guidelines. Situations that affect a single institution, such as a student death, will be represented by the respective PIO. Situations that involve the campus facilities or operations, such as a natural disaster, will be represented by the designated AHEC PIO.

2. **Notification of Key Constituencies**

   The Crisis Communications Team will determine which groups need to be informed first. It is important to keep in mind that people will seek—and believe—other sources of information (e.g., news reports, rumors, word of mouth) in the absence of official communication. Effective communication will help quell rumors, maintain morale, and ensure public safety. Appendix C2 contains a description of the communication tools, their possible applications in a crisis, and who can operate those tools.
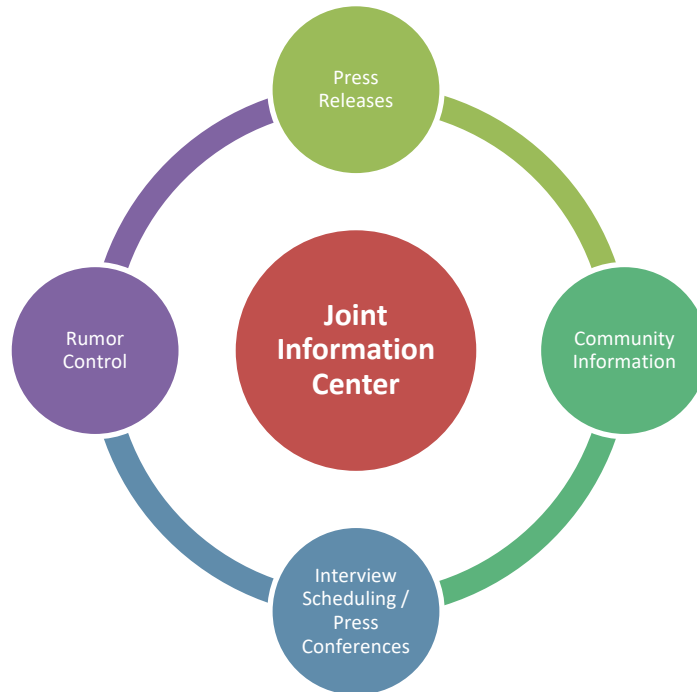
   Key constituencies include:

   - Students
   - Faculty
   - Staff
   - Neighbors
   - General Public
   - News Media

3. Development of Fact Sheet/Standby Media Statement

As soon as possible after the incident, a media statement/fact sheet will be prepared to supplement communication with key constituencies and information provided to reporters by the spokespersons. It will be approved by the AHEC CEO or designee (in consultation with the AEC, as needed) and checked for accuracy by those with a direct knowledge of the crisis. Fact sheets released publicly or posted to the web must be time stamped and updated as information changes.

4. Notification of the Media

The AHEC AVP of Campus Relations, in consultation with the institutional PIOs, will decide the best way(s) of reaching the news media. In cases where a crisis is likely to be prolonged and/or is especially complex, the AVP may choose to create a Joint Information Center (JIC) and/or a news media briefing center to coordinate the information flow and assure that the right people are involved in collecting and disseminating information.

Given the necessary considerations for appropriate media staging locations that can accommodate vehicles such as satellite trucks, the primary location for a press conference related to a campus crisis will be St. Cajetan's Church.

The secondary location is Tivoli Student Union. Communication with the media must occur frequently, as new information is known. Information from news briefings may be captured and posted to the AHEC and/or institutional web pages, along with updated fact sheets. Effort will be made to monitor news coverage in key media and to correct significant inaccuracies, either in those media themselves or in material distributed by the campus.

In general, the campus will welcome reporters and allow them as much access as public safety and good taste permit. Public information officers will facilitate access to key knowledgeable individuals and respond quickly to as many requests as possible. Communication must occur early and often but be confined to the facts. All information must be conveyed with an eye toward what will be most important to various publics.

In the event of a significant crisis where a barrage of media calls are expected, an individual in the AHEC Executive Office or the Communications Office, will be named to use a media log to keep track of reporter inquiries, evaluate interview requests, and respond with consistent information. Appendix C3 contains a sample media log.

IV.   Plan Testing and Validation

This plan shall be updated and exercised as needed. Full activation of the plan will be incorporated into any disaster/crisis exercises.

Responsibility for updating the Crisis Communications Plan rests with the AHEC Campus Relations Unit.

V.   After-Action Report/Review (AAR)

After a crisis, the AHEC AVP of Campus Relations will convene the Crisis Communications Team for a review of lessons learned. This AAR may be used to provide summary information to a more comprehensive campus-wide AAR coordinated through the AHEC Emergency Preparedness Manager.

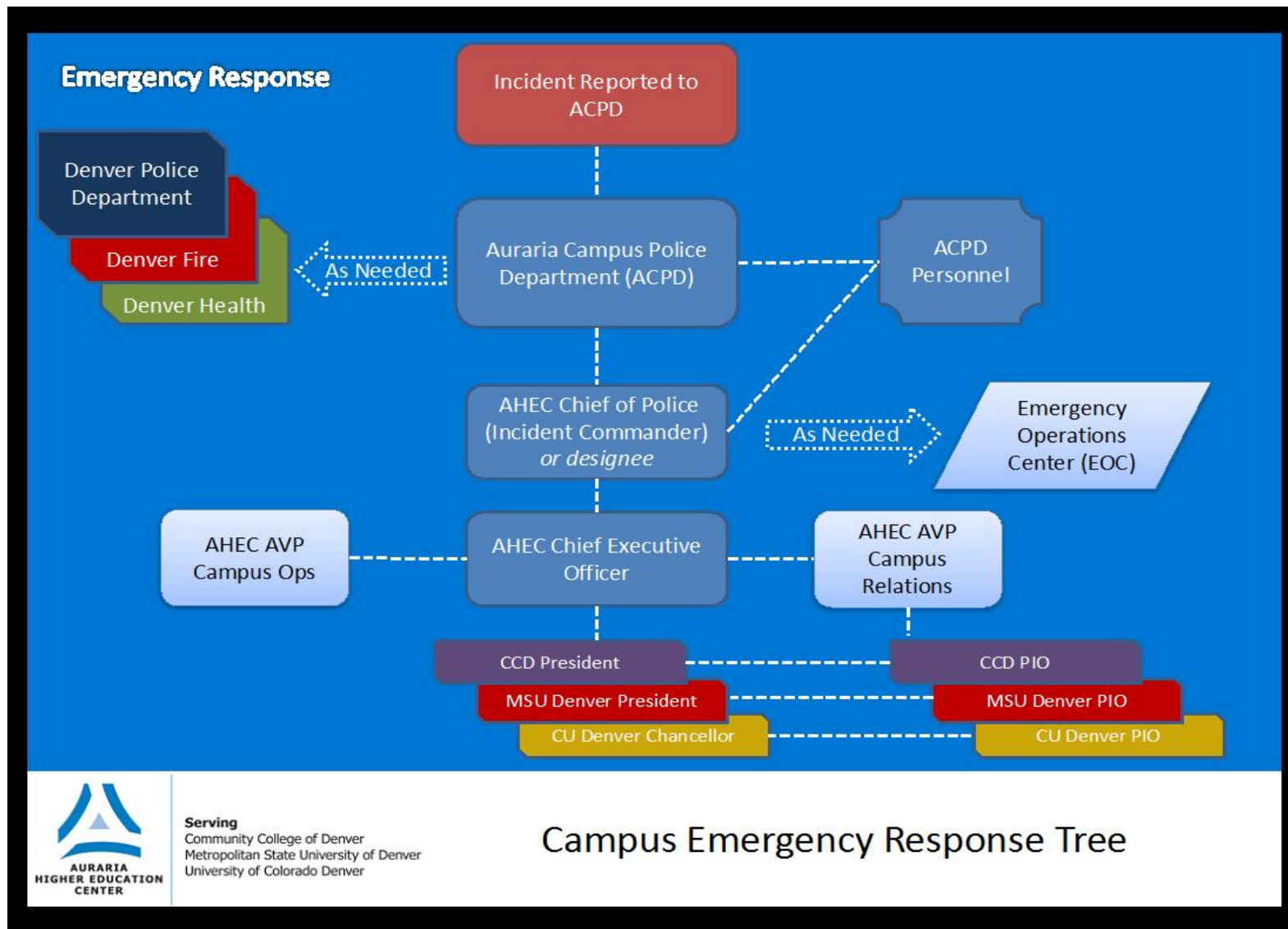## Attachments

Appendix C1: Information Flow Guides

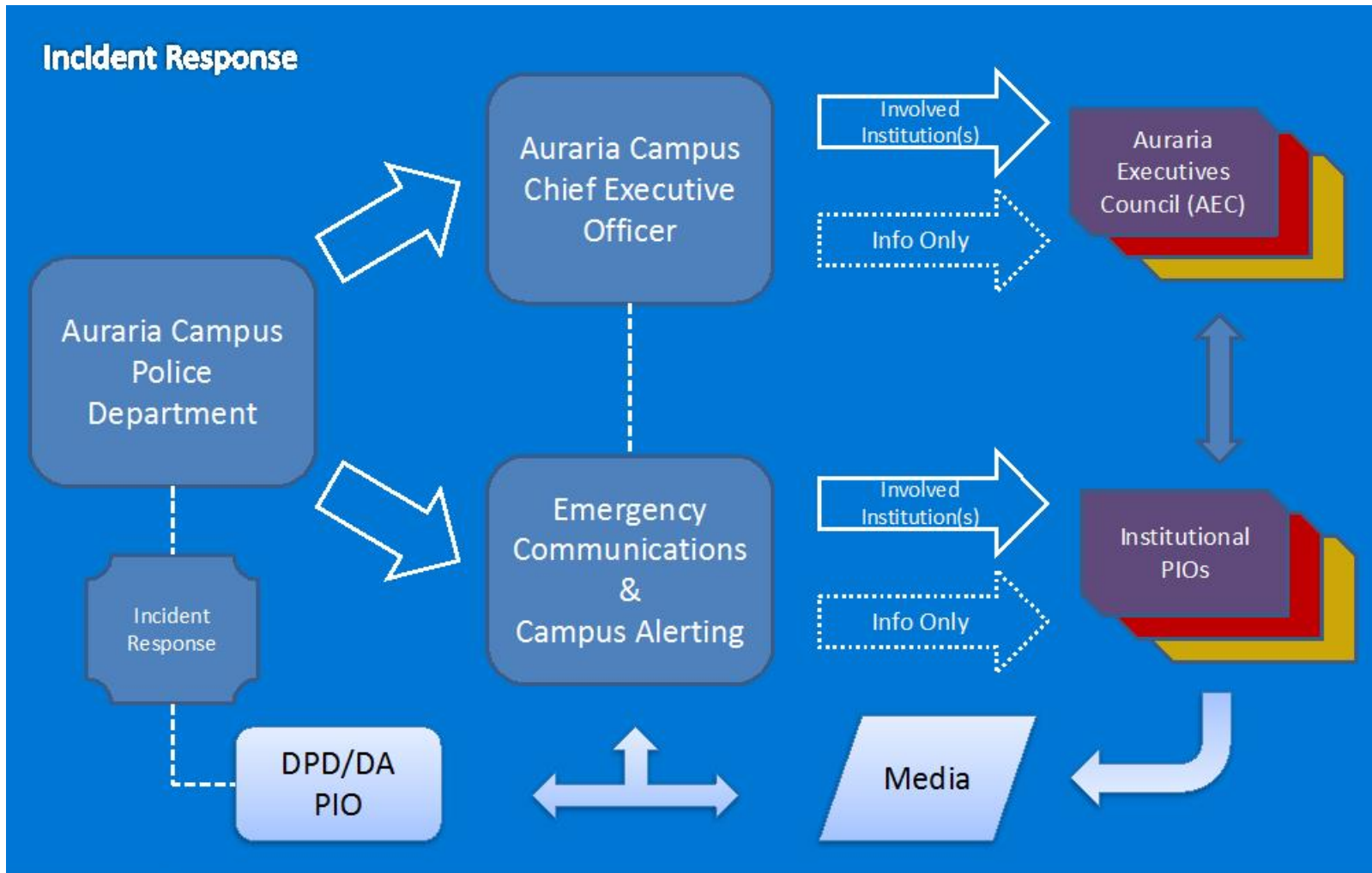Appendix C2: Emergency Communication and Notification Tools

Appendix C3: Media Log

Appendix C4: Crisis Communications Team contact information

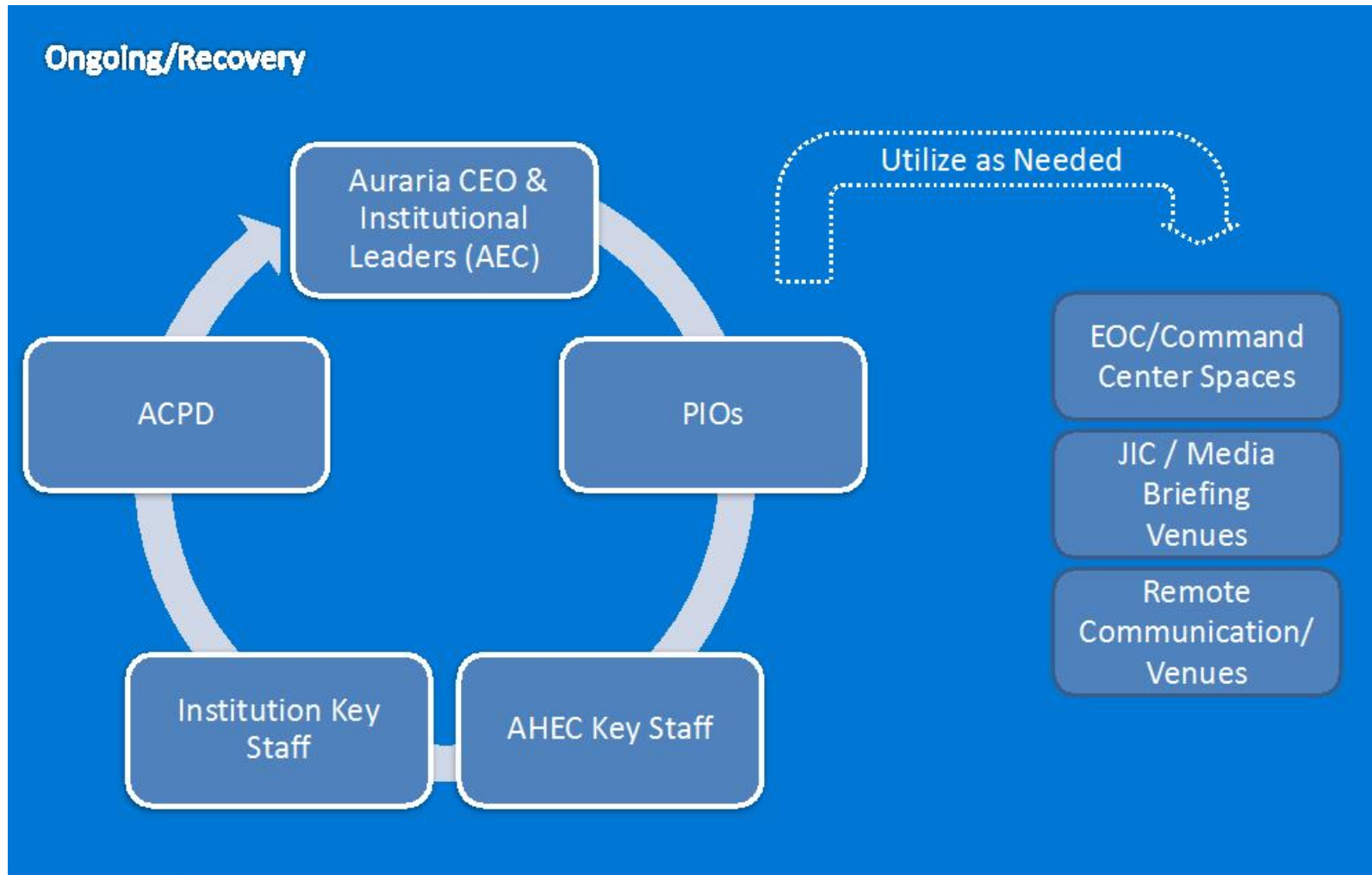Appendix C5: Facilities Available to EOC/JIC/Policy Group Activation

Appendix C1 – Information Flow Guides

Campus Emergency Response Tree

Campus Emergency Incident Response

Campus Emergency Ongoing/ Recovery

Appendix C2 – Emergency Communication and Notification Tools

It is important to note in a crisis situation that no single medium will suffice to notify all constituencies. A combination of communications resources will need to be employed to reach the widest number of people as quickly as possible. Depending on the particulars of the situation, some combination of the tools listed below may be employed.

Communications Tool	Application	Characteristics	Responsible Party
Emergency Notification System RAVE Alert	Official information sent via text, voice, and/or email messages to mobile devices and computers	• Provides active notification to RAVE subscribers • Used to disseminate official information during emergencies or crisis situations that may disrupt the normal operation of the campus or threaten the health or safety of members of the campus community • Is scalable to target primary audience	• Sent directly by ACPD or AHEC Communications • Institutions responsible for proper system configuration for distribution
EMAIL Campus all-user email list	Message sent directly to recipients' email	• Provides active notification • Recipients may not be near email to receive	• Sent directly by AHEC Communications • Institutions responsible for proper system configuration for distribution
Auraria Campus Emergency Hotline 877-556-EMER (3637)	Messages recorded on official campus hotline	• Great source of information if community knows where to check • Does not provide active notification, has limited capacity	• AHEC Crisis Communications team to maintain recording
Website Postings • AHEC Homepage • Institutional Homepages	Messages posted on official websites	• Great source of information if community knows where to check • Does not provide active notification • Power and internet connectivity dependent	• AHEC Communications to post information on AHEC page • Institutional webmasters post info on institutional websites
Social Media • AHEC Twitter and Facebook • Institutional SM outlets	Quick updates posted to followers in real time	• Provides active notification to followers • Limited to followers and their sharing of posts/tweets • Facebook may not display updated posts in newsfeeds sequentially	• AHEC Communications to manage AHEC SM • Institutional communications offices to manage institutional SM

Appendix C3 – Media Log

In the event of a significant crisis where a barrage of media calls is expected, an individual in the AHEC Executive Office, Emergency Operations Center, or Joint Information Center will be named to use a media log to keep track of reporter inquiries, evaluate interview requests, and respond with consistent information. When information is available, the incident PIO and/or their designee will respond.

Date	Time	Media Outlet	Name	Phone	Email	Questions
9-1-17	*0920*	*9News*	*John Appleseed*	*303.871.9999*	*John.appleseed@9news.com*	*Update requested on student enrollment history*

Appendix C4 – Crisis Communications Team List

TITLE/ROLE
AHEC Communications & Campus Relations
Assistant Vice President of Campus Relations / AHEC PIO
Communications Director (back-up PIO)
Emergency Preparedness Manger
Marketing Manager (Social Media)
Auraria Campus Police Department
Chief of Police
Investigations Commander (back-up)
Patrol Commander (back-up)
Institutional Communications Directors/PIOs
CCD Director of Marketing & Communications / External PIO
CCD Executive Assistant to the President / Internal PIO
MSU Denver Chief of Staff / PIO
MSU Denver Senior Director of Communications (back-up PIO)
CU Denver Director of Communications and Media / PIO
CU Denver Media Relations Specialist (back-up PIO)
AHEC Information Technology/Telecom
Director of IT & Telecom
Software Support Administrator
Telecom Specialist

The AHEC AVP of Campus Relations shall be responsible for maintaining updated contact information for listed individuals.

Appendix C5 – Facilities Available to EOC/JIC/Policy Group Activation

Location	Capacity	Use	Features
AHEC			
Administration 110C	24	Primary EOC	Secure Facility (inside ACPD); 4-network WIFI; hard-wired phones; hard-wired Ethernet; cable TV; projector
Administration 370H	12	Primary JIC (PIO group)	4-network WIFI; hard-wired phones; hard-wired Ethernet; cable TV; projector
Administration 370S	8	Policy Group (Executive Leadership)	4-network WIFI; hard-wired phones; hard-wired Ethernet
Tivoli Garage	24	Command Post/EOC	4-network WIFI; TV; hard-wired phones; hard-wired Ethernet; redundant dispatch workstation
1068 9th Street	10	Policy Group (Executive Leadership)	4-network WIFI; hard-wired phones; hard-wired Ethernet; projector
CCD			
Cherry Creek 303	20	TBD	Wi-Fi service (CCD, CCD guest, CCCS network); 6 hard-wired ethernet lines; projector; conference speaker phone; emergency preparedness kit
Clear Creek Board Room	12	TBD	Wi-Fi (CCD and CCD guest); 4 hard-wired ethernet lines; emergency preparedness kit in adjacent office
MSU Denver			
In development			
CU Denver			
In development			